In the Body of the Beholder: Herder's Aesthetics and Classical Sculpture

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ὥστε ἡ ψυχὴ ὥσπερ ἡ χείρ ἐστιν.[1]

As we have seen in the introduction to this volume (pp. 000, 000), the Pygmalion trope had particular conceptual currency in the latter half of the eighteenth century.[2] Although in Ovid the statue is fashioned from *ebur*, ivory, contemporary depictions including a sculptural realisation by Étienne-Maurice Falconet (fig. 1) showed her in marble, referencing the dominant medium associated with antiquity at the time. Following the lead of Winckelmann, contemporary conceptions of classical Greece were regularly shaped around a canon of sculpture.[3] A host of historians, critics, and philosophers embraced the pure beauty, the *Schönheit*, which classical sculptures appeared to embody.[4] Among them Johann Gottfried Herder paid particular attention to the aesthetic mechanisms by which such beauty was perceived. Platt and Squire in the previous chapter examined the tactile appeal of sculpture in antiquity (pp xx-xx), a sensuality which may likewise be found in Herder's approach to three-dimensional artwork.

Although typically placed among the visual arts,[5] it is only through touch, according to Herder, that sculpture is fully appreciated: as music appeals to the ears and painting to the eyes, sculpture, as *die schöne Kunst des Gefühls* ("the fine art for touch"), corresponds to "the

[1] 'The soul is like a hand.' Aristotle, *De Anima* 432a1.
[2] On Galatea as eighteenth-century icon, see Joshua (2001: 31–51); on the use of the motif by Condillac, see Gaiger (2002: 13).
[3] See Pearce (1992) on the synecdochic function of museum objects as representatives of their source culture.
[4] Sculptural metaphor played a significant role in the idealising construction of ancient Greece, from Winckelmann and Lessing through to Goethe, Schiller, A.W. Schlegel, and Hegel. See Malsch (1990) on Herder's place in this tradition. On other aspects of German philhellenism at this time, see e.g. Butler (1935) more recently, Marchand (2003) Guthenke (2008) and Billings (2014) & (2016). .
[5] Candlin (2010); cf. Boden (2000) and Platt & Squire, this volume, pp xx.

sense which perceives things in depth".[6] Herder does not mean that it is necessary to make physical contact with the artwork in question, and indeed implies that this would short-circuit the work's effects. Rather, by attending scrupulously to the sensations occurring in your own body as a result of its proximity, you can tune into and cultivate the haptic frisson activated by encountering any three-dimensional form.[7] As I will show in this essay, Herder's theory of *fühlende Einbildung*, or the 'feeling imagination', anticipates current neurocognitive models of haptic perception. Of particular relevance are the findings of Marc Jeannerod concerning the neural processing of pragmatic affordances, or the action-centred properties of objects. According to Jeannerod and others, perceiving an object visually has been shown to activate simulations of potential kinetic engagement.[8]

This simple act of activation may be pleasurable in itself,[9] but Herder is particularly concerned with what constitutes *Schönheit* ("pure beauty"): what it consists of, how to recognise it, and what to do with it when it confronts you.[10] To this end, his essays *Plastik: einige Wahrnehmungen über Form und Gestalt aus Pygmalions bildendem Traume* ("Sculpture: some observations on shape and form from Pygmalion's creative dream") and *Kritische Wäldchen 4* ("Fourth Critical Grove") concentrate on the sculptural forms considered at the time to epitomise artistic perfection, namely the collections of anthropomorphic Graeco-Roman statues on display in Florence and Rome. Herder had not yet visited Italy when he wrote these essays, whose insights into the interdependence of the senses are supposedly predicated on direct contact with peerless masterpieces. On the

[6] *Kritische Wäldchen 4* ("Fourth Critical Grove") 2.3; Moore (2006: 216). All translations of *Kritische Wäldchen 4* are from Moore (2006) unless otherwise indicated.
[7] As Moore (2006: 15) observes, "Herder does not mean to suggest that we best appreciate sculptural form by groping the marble with our eyes shut… The mind imaginatively recuperates the three-dimensionality of the object on the basis of ideas such as mass and extension originally furnished by touch".
[8] See discussion below, pp xx-xx.
[9] Engaging with sculpture is a "psychotropic mechanism" as defined by Smail (2008): a deliberate modification of behaviour resulting in neurochemical change.
[10] Defining beauty was the central project of eighteenth-century aesthetics, but Herder's innovation was to focus not on the characteristics of the object but the process of observation itself. See discussion in Norton (1991).

contrary, it was via casts and copies that Herder developed his theory of touch as the sense through which we access the plastic realisation of beauty. *Kritische Wäldchen 4*, although it remained unpublished until after Herder's death, was written in 1769, and its implications for sculpture developed more fully over the succeeding decade to be published in 1779 as *Plastik*. It was not until 1788 that Herder, in emulation of his friend and colleague Goethe, set out for Italy, ardent for a cultural consummation that remained elusive.[11] *Plastik*'s manifesto represents a response to contemporary aesthetic theory refracted through Winckelmann as much as it represents phenomenological experience.[12] Nevertheless, it also represents a crucial moment in the reception of classical sculpture and a self-reflexive treatment of the sensory engagement this art-form invites.

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Every sculpture is an installation of sorts, and installations solicit performative participation from their attendees. Do you "attend" a sculpture? You would certainly attend *to* a sculpture, or in Herder's version, attend to its co-presence in your kinaesphere, the area you can potentially encompass by moving. Although touch is commonly regarded as involving skin-to-surface contact with objects or environments, particularly through the hands and fingers, this is only one aspect of haptic perception. As well as registering pressure, temperature, and pain in the cutaneous receptors, the somatosensory system also processes a range of data from around the body. This includes proprioceptive information concerning the position of joints and muscles, and the closely related sense of kinaesthesia or one's own movement.[13] In

[11] Knoll (1990).

[12] The seminal works of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, "Thoughts on the imitation of Greek works in painting and sculpture" (1755) and *History of the Art of Antiquity* (1764) established Greek art as the ideal paradigm. Herder was also aware of Lessing's response in *Laocoön* (1766). On Herder's reception of Winckelmann, see Harloe (2013: 205–43).

[13] It also includes the vestibular system, responsible for maintaining balance and measuring acceleration, and the usually imperceptible regulation of body chemistry. See Damasio (1999), Berthoz (2000), and Millar (2008) on the components of the somatosensory system. For definitions of touch incorporating all haptic senses, see Paterson (2007: *passim*) and Candlin (2010: 5); also Sheets-Johnstone quoted in Gallagher (2005: 7 n. 3).

conjunction with vision, haptic awareness enables an organism to judge object properties such as proximity, velocity, and mass in order to perform complex sensorimotor operations like crossing a busy road, or carving marble, or catching a ball. Because any action, even an act of perception, involves synthesising sensorimotor data with input from other modalities, the isolation of one "sense" from another is somewhat artificial.[14] The profound contribution of touch to human experience has only recently been recognised, however, particularly in comparison to the longstanding fetish for vision dominating philosophical and critical discourse, and therefore re-engaging with haptic aesthetics offers a valuable counterweight.[15] For this reason, I have chosen to refer to the "beholder" of sculpture throughout because the term's formality imparts more structure to the transaction than the less active role of "viewer", which also carries unwelcome ocularcentric connotations; moreover, the (etymologically related) beholder *holds* the object in his field of awareness, much as the German *Begriff* (concept) is "grasped" (*begriffen*). Herder's definition of touch incorporates factors now recognised as integral elements of haptic perception: spatial dynamics, object affordances, kinaesthesia, and motor memory. Touch, as Herder realised, spreads throughout the entire body and suffuses every living moment.

It also informs cognitive processing. *Plastik* opens with a summary of Diderot's "Letter on the blind for the use of those who can see" (1749), a defence of the sense of touch against the prevailing association of vision with abstract thought and "higher" reasoning. Like Herder, Diderot subscribed to the empiricist position that human knowledge was acquired through sense experience, rather than generated by a disembodied faculty of

[14] Millar (2008: 43, 113) on spatial intermodality; Berthoz (2000: 5) on kinaesthesia. See further Butler & Purves (2013) on cross-sensory experience in the ancient world.
[15] There is a growing interest in touch in sensory history, e.g. Classen (2012). This is not confined to modernity; as Porter (2010: 8) argues, "Materialism is an essential component of aesthetic reflection in antiquity from its earliest origins".

reason.[16] Diderot's contention was that congenitally blind individuals conceptualise the world using tactile and motor representations that function like mental "images" but differ in their modal content. He uses this hypothesis to address the so-called "Molyneux Question", first posed in a letter to John Locke in 1688. Molyneux had asked whether a man blind from birth who had regained his sight as an adult would be able to distinguish a cube from a sphere by vision alone, or whether he could only tell which was which by handling them. Diderot, like Herder (and Locke), reached a negative conclusion: touch and sight register different properties, and "it is by experience alone that we learn to compare our sensations with what occasions them".[17]

Herder sets out in *Kritische Wäldchen 4* (KW4*)* to develop an inductive theory of aesthetics, refuting the position expressed in Riedel's *Theorie der schönen Künste* ("Theory of the Fine Arts", 1767) that the human mind possesses an innate sense of what is beautiful. On the contrary, Herder argues, beauty is an acquired taste, and taste "a habitual application of our judgement to objects of beauty".[18] Judgement is the product of long-term repeated exposure to a range of comparable stimuli, until the process of sensual apprehension becomes so abbreviated that the beholder is no longer aware it has taken place, and attributes his resulting aesthetic preferences to a nonexistent faculty of rational, natural discrimination.[19] Such preferences can only be developed by making intensive, extensive comparisons between the objects in a given category (such as anthropomorphic marble sculpture/s) and extrapolating criteria for ranking these comparisons. Taste takes practice; practice makes both perfect and imperfect, as these values do not precede the studied application of perception. Your ability to perceive beauty, then, requires cultivation, and the instrument recommended

[16] For contextualisation of Herder's thought in eighteenth-century aesthetic and empiricist philosophy, see Norton (1991: esp. 155–232); Moore (2006: 1–30); Gaiger (2002: 6–15).
[17] In the original: *C'est l'expérience seule qui nous apprend à comparer les sensations avec ce qui les occasionne* (Trans. Adams 1999).
[18] KW4, 1.6; Moore (2006: 199).
[19] *Ibid*. 1.5; Moore (2006: 196–7).

by Herder as a tool for cultivating this sense within the body, carving it into the psyche, is antique sculpture, "the works of Phidias and Lysippus".[20]

The habit of aesthetic discrimination can be developed to the point of becoming "second nature" (*wird Fertigkeit, wird Gewohnheit, wird Natur*)[21] because of the way in which our senses learn to grasp the world and convert its maelstrom of stimuli into meaningful data. This is the crux of Herder's association of sculpture with touch. The medium's intrinsic properties, those which distinguish it from other art forms (and in particular from painting), its volume and depth, solidity and mass, contour and curvature, its alteration of the space it occupies and the pressure its presence exerts on the matter around it, are held in common by all three-dimensional objects; but we are only aware that these properties exist because we have previously experienced their tactile effects on our bodies. "It is only by a habitual abbreviation (*Verkürzung*)", Herder writes, "that we see bodies as surfaces and fancy that we recognise through sight what in childhood we properly learned very slowly, only by way of touch".[22]

Shaun Gallagher has shown that Diderot and Herder were right, but for the wrong reasons. The assumption that infants cannot interpret their visual field until they corroborate it tactually is incorrect;[23] however, "continued visual experience after birth is necessary for the proper and continued development of neurons in the visual cortex… [and] deprivation of experience through the critical period would cause degradation of that initial structure".[24] In other words, the infant is born with all the equipment for intermodal perception, but if vision

[20] *Ibid* 2.12; Moore (2006: 281).
[21] *Ibid* 1.5; Moore (2006: 199).
[22] *Ibid* 2.1, Moore (2006: 209). In the original: *Es ist bloss eine gewohnheitsmässige Verkürzung, dass wir Körper als Flächen sehen, und das durch das Gesicht zu erkennen glauben, was wir würklich in unserer Kindheit, nicht anders als durchs Gefühl und sehr langsam lernten*. Compare the more synaesthetic elision of vision and touch discussed by Platt & Squire, this volume.
[23] Imitation of facial expressions occurs from birth: Gallagher (2005: 74–5); the infant may have no choice *but* to imitate the expression, if development of mirror neurons precedes that of the inhibitory reflex. Cf. Jeannerod (1994: 200).
[24] Gallagher (2005: 165).

is not exercised in conjunction with other senses at each stage of development, their integration will not be sustained. Moreover, while infants can recognise objects without prior tactile contact,[25] their comprehension of these objects' use-value is acquired by practising the associated motor skills.[26] The haptic properties of objects (temperature, volume, hardness, texture, weight, and finally shape) become "salient" to infants at different stages of their development, depending on the degree of motor ability required to execute different types of "exploratory procedure" ranging from "static contact" to more complex interactions.[27] Herder's central premise, then, holds true; although vision and touch are in fact neurologically integrated from birth, without experiential application to reinforce the connection, they will drift apart. It appears, however, that the critical factor in learning to process the material world in early childhood is not tactile contact, but movement.[28]

Originally reliant on empirical experiments with reaching and grasping, dropping and fumbling, clutching and pulling – and, although Herder does not mention relationships to architecture in this context, climbing and slipping and scrambling and tunnelling – we begin progressively to assess material attributes such as function, scale, and proximity through vision alone, without the need to confirm our assessments tactually. Nevertheless, it is important not to mistake abbreviation for substitution. Touch has not been supplanted, but rather reconfigured as embodied knowledge, a complex latent memory reactivated as the unrealised anticipation of movement: if I grip the cup, if I lower myself onto the chair, if I were to embrace this figure or clench these muscles or slide down this colossal limb…

[25] Experiments have shown that while infants habituated to a tactile stimulus can recognise the same object when it is presented visually, "the reverse is not true": the newborns tested did not appear to recognise by touch a three-dimensional solid with which they were visually familiar. Streri (2005: 334, 338–9); cf. Gallagher (2005: 65–85, 153–61).
[26] See Jeannerod (1994: 197–9) on the difference between "semantic" and "pragmatic" perception of an object.
[27] Bushnell and Boudreau (1991).
[28] Sheets-Johnstone (2011)

The regressive impulse to follow through on these promises of kinetic interaction is likewise at work in the fantasy of Pygmalion. Described sensually by Ovid,[29] it is the sculptor-*amator* alone who actually touches. Whereas Pygmalion exercises the craftsman's prerogative and lays proprietary hands on his work, the pleasure of beholding sculpture in the context of the public gallery, as in Herder's account, resides in an indefinite deferral of the imagined action. It has been suggested that we only become conscious of an anticipated movement if the movement itself remains "covert", i.e. unperformed.[30] Ongoing resistance to performing the movement therefore etches it into the beholder's consciousness with the acid clarity of frustrated compulsion. And yet, as Daniel Smail has shown, we take pleasure in deliberately setting off any such neurochemical transactions.[31]

When the properties of three-dimensional matter have been organised into sculpture, it is then that this process of aesthetic response is allowed to telescope down (having undergone *Verkürzung* ["abbreviation"]) into the apparently unmediated and disembodied recognition of *Schönheit* proposed by Herder's opponent Riedel, who dispenses with the intermediate haptic filter. In *Plastik,* Herder applies his theory of sensory synthesis to its ideal subject, classical sculpture. "That statues (*Bildsäulen*) can be seen, no one doubts", he concedes, "but we are entitled to ask whether the originary determination of the notion of beautiful form can in fact be derived from the sense of sight".[32] He continues:

> The living, embodied truth of the three-dimensional space of angles, of form and volume, is not something we can learn through sight (*Raum, Winkel, Form, Rundung lerne ich als solche in leibhafter Wahrheit nicht durchs Gesicht erkennen*). This is all

[29] See also Purves; Squire & Platt (both this volume).
[30] Jeannerod (1994: 190).
[31] Smail (2008). See n. 6 above.
[32] *Plastik* 1.3; Gaisser (2002: 40). All translations of *Plastik* are from Gaiger (2002) and all emphases original, unless otherwise noted.

> the more true of the essence of sculpture, *beautiful* form and *beautiful* shape, for this is not a matter of colour, or of the play of proportion and symmetry, or of light and shadow, but of physically present, tangible truth (*dargestellte, tastbare Wahrheit*)… Sight destroys beautiful sculpture rather than creating it; it transforms it into planes and surfaces (*Ecken und Flächen*), and rarely does it not transform the beautiful fullness, depth, and volume of sculpture (*das schönste Wesen ihrer Innigkeit, Fülle und Runde*) into a mere play of mirrors.
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> *Plastik* 1.3; Gaiger (2002: 40-41).

The essential attributes of sculpture, its *Wesen*, are given here as *Innigkeit* (depth, interiority), *Fülle* (fullness, plenitude, voluptuousness), and *Runde* (roundedness, convexity). Also essential, and key to the palpable difference between sculpture and painting, is sculpture's delivery of *dargestellte, tastbare Wahrheit* ("physically present, tangible truth"). Related in one sense to the contemporary view that Nature and the artisans of ancient Greece were in identical possession of unselfconscious formal integrity, this observation also expresses Herder's conviction that co-presence with a three-dimensional solid triggers a sensory, hence aesthetic, response fundamentally different to that which is triggered by a flat surface, however beguilingly decorated.

The sculpture possesses substance, requiring negotiation as a mutual occupant of space. "A sculpture before which I kneel can embrace me", Herder insists. "It can become my friend and companion: it is *present*, it is *there*".[33] Unlike a painting, which offers images of a subject matter which is, by definition, absent, the sculpture presents an intervention into the physical environment of the beholder; even if it is *not* touched, it *could* be, and into this chasm between actual and potential surges the suspended energy of a curling wave: the

[33] *Plastik* 1.4; Geiger (2002: 45).

embrace performed again and again in unbroken stillness, never closing, the endless "companionship" undissolved. In his one-sided devotion, the beholder resembles Pygmalion adding yet another carnelian, another carnation, pressed against the creamy fleshless bone. Herder's imagined orientation, on his knees as if anticipating a caress – and kneeling, not standing, implying veneration – contributes profoundly to the way in which his chosen sculpture is permitted to affect him. The physical attitude adopted by the beholder in relation to the artwork creates a *pas de deux* experienced not via the gaze of a spectator but via the internal proprioception of the performer: stirring the haptic depths, not glancing off visible surfaces.

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So if one has the opportunity to exercise this sensory faculty, once one is conscious of its operation, how to make the most of the encounter? How, for instance, in a gallery, constrained by both convention and physiology, might one conduct oneself to maximise the haptic rapport? Herder has a few suggestions. Painting's illusion of perspective can be enjoyed by the viewer who occupies a single standpoint, typically front and centre at a distance sufficient to take in the whole canvas at once. Sculpture of the type treated by Herder, however, offers no such optimal standpoint, and can only be absorbed if the beholder is prepared to incorporate movement into his appreciation of the artwork. He "circles restlessly", moving around so as to take in every possible perspective. The angles from which a freestanding sculpture can be absorbed are infinite, and the most infinitesimal adjustments in the beholder's orientation can produce entirely new configurations. Herder's *Liebhaber*

(art lover) performs his circuits "sunk deep in contemplation" (*tiefgesenkt*), alert to nuance, cultivating kinetic engagement as a deliberate alternative to static inertia.[34]

Once this freewheeling, mobile point of view has been attained, establishing what Zuckert terms a "nonperspectival grasp" of the artwork,[35] something more is needed to convert the resulting fragmented visual images into a composite haptic entity. "When I have described the whole circumcircle, I have perceived nothing more than a polygon composed of many small sides and angles", Herder observes.[36] Each individual facet might be very pretty, but their unintegrated compilation lacks cohesion, the very *Innigkeit* (interiority) and *Fülle* (fullness) that make sculpture a sensual medium. In order to synthesise this series of optical snapshots, the beholder must apply embodied knowledge to generate a three-dimensional compound based on sense memories of touch.

It is perhaps in this phase that Herder's beholder, cast in the role of Winckelmann contemplating his beloved Belvedere Apollo, ceases his circling. Although he seems to be standing still, his inner sense of movement continues to flow (*Er scheint auf einem ewigen Punkte zu stehen, und nichts ist weniger*):[37]

> He adopts as many viewpoints as he can, changing his perspective from one moment to the next so that he avoids sharply defined surfaces. To this end he gently glides only around the contours of the body (*gleitet er nur in der Umfläche des Körpers sanft umhin*), changes his position, moves from one spot to another and then back again; he follows the line that unfolds and runs back on itself (*er folgt der in sich selbst umherlaufenden Linie*), the line that forms bodies and here, with its gentle declivities, forms the beauty of the body standing before him.

[34] *Ibid* 1.2; Geiger (2002: 41).
[35] Zuckert (2009: 288).
[36] KW4, 2.3; Moore (2006: 217).
[37] "He seems to stand in a fixed position, but nothing could be further from the truth."

KW4, 2.3; Moore (2006: 218-19).

Movement through space, which liberated the beholder from a fixed position and showed him the sculpture as a body whose constant rotation mirrors his own, has given way to a virtual traversal of the statue's topography. The gaze and the proprioceptive self, the kinaesphere, are elided: *he* glides (*gleitet*), *he* flows effortlessly all around the elegant contours of the figure before him. The performance of movement has been succeeded by the sensation of movement, as flight succeeds take-off, creating a giddy discrepancy between how the beholder appears to an external observer – pale and frozen, like a statue of himself – and the inward dance that sweeps him around the frictionless bodyscape of stone. He avoids sharp edges (*scharfe, bestimmte Fläche*) that might occasion a sudden skid or drop. Scale becomes warped as he traverses the sculpture in kinaesthetic close-up at odds with the limiting frame of the rational gaze.

Architecture provides Herder with a life-sized apparatus for exercising the same haptic faculties. Having absorbed the constituent components of a building, "from the elementary and simplest column to the richest diversity of its parts", Herder's beholder begins to experience the familiar vertiginous slide into virtual traversal: "You will ascend from the symmetry of two columns to their arch and from there to the palace in its entirety (*alsdann von der Symmetrie zweener Säulen zu ihrem Bogen hinaufsteigen und von da zum Pallaste in seinem ganzen Bilde*)", Herder predicts, "then glide down facades and rows of columns (*dann Seiten und Säulenreihen fliegen*)".[38] Although not mentioned in this context, the soaring "glide" around the columns must surely be predicated, as in the case of sculpture, on a kinetic impression of the palace's dimensions acquired through the contemplative action of walking and turning.

[38] KW4, 2.12; Moore (2006: 280).

Herder's formulation is affirmed by the observations of Marc Jeannerod concerning neural activity during "object-oriented action". When humans and other primates are presented with graspable objects, we perceive these objects not only in terms of their semantic identity ("That is a spoon / a coconut / Apollo") but in terms of their pragmatic affordance ("Grip it / smash it / adore it").[39] What Jeannerod's experiments demonstrate is that the same areas of the brain, such as the pre-motor cortex, show identical patterns of activation during the actual ("overt") performance of a motor task and the imagined ("covert") performance of these tasks. In both cases, Jeannerod proposes, we are seeing the necessary neurochemical preparation for movement taking place, whether it is followed through into performance or inhibited before reaching the muscles: "Covert actions are in fact actions, except for the fact that they are not executed".[40] The significance of Jeannerod's theory for Herder is twofold. First, if sculpture (like any other three-dimensional object) is perceived not just as representational but as the goal of various kinetic affordances, the art-form's haptic quality resides in its instigation of these covert actions. Second, as mentioned above, Jeannerod suggests that we become conscious of motor imagery only when the action is not carried out; otherwise, the preparatory simulation is discharged and awareness transferred to the movement itself.[41] Sculpture can stimulate a perpetual oscillation of actions anticipated and inhibited. I suggest that if the beholder's somatic attention is focused on cultivating this oscillation, the result is Herder's sense of virtual movement.

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[39] Jeannerod (1994; 2001); cf. Gallagher (2005: 8) for comment. Boden (2000: 295) applies the concept of affordances to sculpture (and painting).
[40] Jeannerod (2001: 103). Cf. Berthoz (2000: 17–24).
[41] Jeannerod (1994: 190).

Shifting from the mechanisms of perception to the instruments used to train them involves discriminating between artworks on the grounds of their haptic effectiveness, and not surprisingly, the ancient Greeks were judged superior. For Herder, as for Winckelmann, classical sculpture meant white marble. Whiteness signified purity, simplicity, and commitment to form without the optical interference interposed by colours. "The essence of beauty consists not in colour but in shape", asserts Winckelmann. "As white is the colour which reflects the greatest number of rays of light, and consequently is the most easily perceived, a beautiful body will, accordingly, be more beautiful the whiter it is".[42] The polychromy of ancient Greek statues is now a well-known fact, that these warriors and goddesses were picked out in scarlet and gold, their eyes inlaid, their robes brightly patterned, their flesh blooming. Roman portrait statues were likewise painted, and coloured marble became a popular material both in sculpture and architecture during the early empire. It has recently been argued, however, that Greek bronze prototypes tended to be reproduced at Rome from unpainted white marble,[43] and it is these reproductions which Winckelmann claimed as the substantiation of his ideal Greece.

For eighteenth-century historians the supposed preternatural whiteness of ancient sculpture was incontrovertible, and ideologically indispensable. Herder explores the aesthetic implications of the assumption that colour was a distraction alien to sculpture in its most perfected state. Unlike shape, dimension, and weight, colour (he maintains) is a property that cannot be perceived haptically,[44] and therefore should not affect the beholder's judgement of a sculpture's *Schönheit*. Becoming prescriptive, Herder's argument approaches circularity: if

[42] Irwin (1972: 118).
[43] Bradley (2009) and Østergaard (2008) argue for ubiquitous polychromy, although as Østergaard (2008: 50) admits, 'next to nothing has been published on the polychromy of Roman marble copies.' Hägele (2013: 102) states that 'as far as Roman copies of Greek statuary are concerned, white marble was used', artists exploiting texturing techniques such as polishing and drilling instead of paint to create chromatic effects. According to Jockey (2013: 66) 'L'éffacement des couleurs originelles par les copistes romains… constitue un premier pas décisif dans ce glissement progressif de la réception de l'art grec vers un 'achromie' qui préfigure son blanchement futur.'
[44] For an alternative view see Bradley (2013) on 'colour as an object-centred experience' (2013: 132).

sculpture only (properly) appeals to touch, touch is then the only way to recognise proper sculpture, and sculpture if properly done therefore suppresses all extraneous visual factors. Herder's ideal, however, rested primarily on the chalky matt maquillage of plaster casts, and the Roman galleries behind them; antiquity stripped of its motley, muted to white.

Garments likewise interfere with Herder's preferred haptic response to the representation of human figures. This again derives from Winckelmann's ascription of nudity in classical sculpture to the free and uninhibited lifestyle enjoyed by the inhabitants of democratic Athens, an argument which is given an aesthetic spin in *Plastik*. Clothing renders the human body inaccessible, confounding attempts to follow the form of the figure beneath and smothering physiological correspondences with sartorial idiosyncrasy. Modern dress, with its buckles and braid and corsets and hoops, presents an especially gross impediment. The only covering appropriate to the medium – incongruous in depictions of contemporary individuals, and hence appropriate only to the productions of antiquity – is what Herder refers to as "wet drapery" (*nasse Gewänder*). This technique maintains the figure's contours, ensuring that "the essence of sculpture remains the slender body, the rounded knee, the smooth hip, the swelling grape of the youthful breast".[45] Nudity and drapery, on the other hand, are less suited in Herder's view to the modern medium of painting, where drapery stiffens into pompous archaism and nudity lolls around in pornographic lechery.

Despite Herder's concern to quarantine sculptural nudity from sexual overtones and protect its sunlit integrity from prurient insinuations, there are undeniably erotic aspects to his treatment of ancient artworks. One particularly florid passage concentrates on the Sleeping Hermaphrodite (fig. 2):

[45] *Plastik* 2.1; Geiger (2002: 50–1).

> Whoever… has stood before the celebrated Hermaphrodite and has not felt in every curve and turn of the body, in everything that he touches and does not touch, a Bacchic dream (*bacchischer Traum*) of hermaphroditism; whoever has not been tortured by sweet thoughts and by a pleasure that courses through the entire body like a gentle fire; whoever has not felt or perceived (*fühlte und in sich gleichsam*) an involuntary resonance and echo of this same music (*Saitenspiel*) in himself – such a person cannot be made to understand.[46]
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> Herder, *Plastik* 4.1; Geiger (2002: 80-81)

In this instance, it initially appears that the beholder experiences the Hermaphrodite as a desirable other, rather than pursuing the sense of identification that Herder describes elsewhere. The figure vibrates in the beholder like a plucked string, the *Saitenspiel* of its attitude awakening complementary echoes and the possibility of dreaming the same *bacchischer Traum*; but the sweet shock of arousal and the slow burn of desire suggest an autoerotic fantasy indulged at the expense of the slumbering figure. The Hermaphrodite depends precisely on a "nonperspectival grasp" for its effects; approached face-on (that is, from the rear), a coy corkscrew twist of the spine conceals its intersex characteristics, but if curiosity compels the beholder to follow the slope of the knee around to the front of the body (the back of the head), his attempt to resolve this teasing question of gender, and hence gauge the propriety of his own reactions, is playfully thwarted. Herder's prose revels in the ambiguities: whose is the body in which the Bacchic dream is felt, that of the figure or of the beholder? And whose the body lapped by lambent flames? In displacing his own pleasure

[46] *Wer je am berühmten Hermaphroditen stand und nicht fühlte, wie in jeder Schwingung und Biegung des Körpers, in allem, wo er berührt und nicht berührt, bacchischer Traum und Hermaphroditismus herrschet, wie er auf einer Folter süber Gedanken und Wollst schwebt, die ihm, wie ein gelindes Feuer, durch seinen gazen Körper dringet – wer dies nicht fühlte und in sich gleichsam unwillkürlich den Nach – oder Mitklang desselben Saitenspiels wahrnahm, dem können meine nicht und keine Worte es erkläran*.

onto the figure, the beholder invokes Pygmalion's creative dream of anticipated reciprocity. But whereas Pygmalion's desire is for an unattainable Other, the hermaphroditic *bacchischer Traum* liquidates difference, confounding the boundaries between the sexes, between sleeping and waking, self and other, image and imagination.

An alternative to approaching the sculpture as if it were Pygmalion's bride, as a companion to be embraced, is to experience it as a replica of oneself; or rather, to feel oneself taking on the attributes of the sculpted figure. What Herder in a passage alluding either to the Belvedere Torso or the Farnese Hercules (we are not sure which) calls the "feeling imagination" (*fühlende Einbildung*) enables the sufficiently sensitised beholder to "feel Hercules in his whole body and this body in all its deeds" (*da fühlet sie den Herkules immer in seinem ganzen körper und diesen Körper in allen seinen Taten*, KW4, 2.3, 219).[47] It is not only "the mighty contours of [Hercules'] body" which swell the muscles of a sympathetic beholder, but all the labours of which this present muscularity is merely the superficial record (fig. 3). We could go deeper. Interiority now comes to signify not only the figure's three-dimensional firmness, but also the well of mythological memory it taps. To an extent, of course, these memories belong to the beholder and the sculpture simply triggers them, but the "feeling imagination", according to Herder:

> …has no limits, knows no bounds. It has put out its eyes, as it were, so that it does not merely depict a dead surface; it sees nothing of what lies before it but instead gropes its way as if in the dark, is enraptured by the body that it touches, travels with it

[47] Herder's description of the figure in question, including its *Arme, die den Löwen erwürget*, suggests the latter. But if the Torso, then the phrase 'in his whole body' may refer to the fragmentary condition of this artwork, which consists of the trunk and upper thighs of a mature male. Both works were celebrated in the eighteenth century; see Haskell and Penny (1981: 229–32) (Farnese) and (1981: 311–14) (Torso). The Torso receives detailed attention from Winckelmann (1964: 292–3).

> through heaven and hell and to the ends of the earth (*wird begeistert von dem Körper, den sie tastet, und durchzeucht mit ihm Himmel und Hölle und die Enden der Erde*).
>
> KW4, 2.3.[48]

As a beholder begins to infer from the hero's craggy weariness the battles which moulded it, its visible surfaces dissolve; captivated, he merges and sinks into kinetic reverie. To travel with the body of Hercules: does this mean alongside him, like a blind obsessive sidekick, or within him, as his inseparable haptic shadow? The beholder's immersion in Hercules' physiological history suggests the latter, but Herder's syntax again permits both possibilities to coexist.

It has been demonstrated that observing the actions of others prompts a motor simulation similar to that which is prompted by object affordance. "Each time an individual sees an action done by another individual," explain Rizzolatti and Craighero, "neurons that represent that action are activated in the observer's pre-motor cortex. This automatically-induced motor representation of the observed action corresponds to that which is spontaneously generated during active action."[49] Although anthropomorphic sculpture depicts arrested action, its illusion of a moving body may produce similar effects. Herder's contention that haptic apprehension is enhanced by prior tactile or kinetic experience also finds support in experiments conducted on dancers in which it was found that mirror neurons fire more readily in individuals who had themselves learned to perform the skilled movements they were shown.[50] Originally acquired through conscious, repetitive practice, the

[48] The conceit that sculpture can be perceived in the dark recurs throughout both *Plastik* and *KW4*. See Richter (1992: 113, 121) on Herder's consistent characterisation of *Gefühl* as *dunkel* (dark).
[49] Rizzolatti and Craighero (2004: 172). It should be noted that while mirror neurons have been used to explain other psychological phenomena such as theory of mind and empathy, the original studies concerned only motor responses. For a survey of theories concerning internal responses to movement in relation to dance, see Foster (2008).
[50] Calvo-Merino *et al.* (2005).

dancer's complex motor schemata could then be activated, like the haptic responses of Herder's beholder, by visual exposure alone. The representation of movement triggers kinetic ("muscle") memory, which is another term for Jeannerod's "motor imaging".[51] Both the recall and anticipation of movement present as a neural simulation of its trajectory.

While idealised figures inspire kinaesthetic emulation, the opposite occurs for identical reasons when the beholder is confronted by sculptural depictions of ugliness, death, monstrosity, or even realism. Like clothing and colour, repellent subjects such as corpses can exert a perverse appeal in the medium of painting, which holds them at a visual distance in a similar fashion to Aristotelian mimesis. Herder uses his theory of haptic absorption to explain why the same subjects realised three-dimensionally inspire not fascination, but revulsion:

> But a sculpture requires that I slowly and blindly feel my way forward, until I register a gnawing at my flesh and bones and the shudder of death along my nerves…
>
> [Such subjects] are repugnant when encountered by the feeling hand as it advances. Instead of encountering ideas, it encounters horror, and instead of the imitation of things that are, it encounters the terrible degradation of that which is *no more*.
>
> *Plastik* 2.3, 56-57[52]

Just as the gnarled physique of Hercules draws the beholder through the Labours and up to the very threshold of Olympus, the liquescence of decomposition sickens him as he feels his

[51] Fuster (1994: 208).
[52] Examples include "A ravaged, ugly, or distorted form, *Itys* torn to pieces, *Hippolytus* in Euripides' play, *Medea* contorted with rage, *Philoctetes* in the worst convulsions of his illness, someone in the throes of death, or a decomposing corpse struggling against the worms…" *Plastik* 2.3; Geiger (2002: 57). Richter (1992: 127-30) discusses the paradoxical fear of the body's materiality, hence its mortality, in Herder's aesthetic theory. On the sense of touch and the aesthetic experience of watching bodies in pain on the Greek tragic stage see Worman, this volume.

own flesh rotting on the bone. It is as if a form of contamination has occurred, as if the representation of death in this most tactile medium has brought the beholder into visceral contact with his own unstable materiality.[53] It does not appear that Herder had any particular sculpture in mind at this point, although it could be pointed out that celebrated works in Herder's own canon such as "Paetus and Arria" and the Pasquino group do depict corpses (Fig. 4).[54] Such works may be powerful, and their potency may indeed derive from something like the aesthetic process outlined in *Plastik*, but by Herder's definition they cannot be beautiful. Death might be no less effective in arousing the haptic senses, but instead of hypnotically unfurling a Bacchic dream or dispatching you on an heroic quest, the same slow perusal of sculpted nightmares makes the skin crawl and the stomach revolt, like realising your hand has rested on something decayed. Decay, moreover, is soft and implosive, whereas for Herder the essence of beautiful sculpture, or sculptural beauty, is tautness and wholeness, the kinetic surge that sustains its *Fülle*, its *Innigkeit*.[55]

For the same reason, Herder condemns realism in sculpture. Knuckles and kneecaps, interrupting sinuous limbs like bulbous outcrops, cause the sweeping *gleitflug* ("glide") to stumble. Likewise, frizzy hair and prominent veins should be erased, leaving nothing but smooth contours.[56] Veins, in particular, cause Herder to shudder with graveyard disgust, as "the silent sense of touch that feels things in the dark will register the veins as wriggling worms" (*Plastik* 2.2, 54). No reminders of mortality should spoil the ride or disrupt the intimacy, and no irregularities should warp the haptic senses to yearn for anything but harmony. That Greek sculpture (or those works which at the time were classified as Greek

[53] On contamination and touch see Lennon, this volume; on the abject properties of living matter, Grosz (1994) and Kristeva (1982). Concerned only with subject matter, Herder does not mention the potentially comparable effect of beholding anthropomorphic statues that are broken, mutilated, or defaced.
[54] 'Paetus and Arria' is now more commonly known as 'The Gaul and his wife'. On the eighteenth-century identification of this group, see Haskell and Penny (1981: 282–84).
[55] However, twentieth- and twenty-first century artists – Dieter Roth, for example – have incorporated decayed or decaying objects into their work.
[56] *Plastik* 2.2; Geiger (2002: 54–5). This is typical of Herder's period. A generation later, the Parthenon marbles would be extolled for precisely this reason, that they incorporated bones and veins into heroic physiology.

sculpture) appeared to embody such harmony most fully was justification, in Herder's view, for affirming its centrality to an aesthetic education.

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Beholding sculpture in such a way as to cultivate haptic responses takes effort and practice. Herder's method of reception via touch involves an initial period of approach during which the sculpture is scrutinised from every possible angle in order to set the beholder's body in motion – a kind of warm-up – and to create a sense-impression liberated from a fixed-point gaze. This is followed by a period of stillness in which motion is suspended but the kinetic patterns developed continue to flow. From this state of awareness stem various affective possibilities: the beholder either identifies proprioceptively with the sculpted figure, as with the Hercules, or perceives it as a desirable other whose embrace is forever deferred. Alternatively, he may attempt to recover the bodily sensations of the sculptor responsible for hewing such a figure from the stone (*Plastik* 1.3, 41).

Although this leads Herder to draw prescriptive conclusions about the optimal type of sculpture to practice with, the process he outlines may be applied to any three-dimensional object. If an object is approached with heightened somatic attention, it may be possible to dilate the moment indefinitely by repeating the pulses of covert motor response. Opposing Hogarth's contention that the S-shaped curve is inherently beautiful, Herder writes that the "line of beauty" is meaningless unless it occurs in a solid body:

> Even if they only appear on a corset or a saucepan, at least they appear on *something* and so are accessible to another sense, that is to say, accessible first to a sense *other* than the eye. I fully understand that a flickering flame of fire or the surge of the sea as

> it rises in each wave cannot be grasped as something solid. But this does not mean that such things cannot be grasped or touched by the *soul* (*daß unsre Seele sie nicht umfasse, nicht taste*).
>
> *Plastik* 3.1, 64

In falling back on metaphysical vocabulary, Herder struggles to articulate what it is that operates behind the gaze, the sensory faculty that enables touch to be felt in the absence of touch: Pygmalion's sense. The *Seele* also had particular currency in German philhellenism as the site of the *Liebhaber*'s longing to be (re)united with the unattainable perfection of Ancient Greece.[57] In the delirious moment when the *Liebhaber* ("beholder") grasps a sculpture in its nonperspectival entirety, "his soul speaks to it, not as if his soul sees, but as if it touches, as if it feels" (*nun spricht sie [die Seele], nicht, als ob sie sehe, sondern taste, fühle*. *Plastik* 1.3, 41). There is also perhaps an oblique reference here to Aristotle's *De Anima*. For Aristotle, ὥστε ἡ ψυχὴ ὥσπερ ἡ χείρ ἐστιν, 'the soul is like the hand' in that the hand manipulates tools in the same way as the intellect handles ideas, and each sense presents to the soul an εἶδος, an idea or 'form' of the objects it senses.[58] As discussed by Goldner in Chapter 4 of this volume, Aristotle prioritises touch as the sense without which no living creature could exist, and the sense by means of which all other senses operate: τὸ γὰρ σῶμα ἁπτικὸν τὸ ἔμψυχον πᾶν, 'every ensouled being is a haptic body' (435a14). Herder's soul could also be called his kinaesphere. He is perceiving sculpture as the memory and the possibility of movement. In the moment of haptic reception, stone becomes flesh, and Pygmalion learns to dance.

[57] Billings (2016).
[58] ὥστε ἡ ψυχὴ ὥσπερ ἡ χείρ ἐστιν· καὶ γὰρ ἡ χεὶρ ὄργανόν ἐστιν ὀργάνων, καὶ ὁ νοῦς εἶδος εἰδῶν καὶ ἡ αἴσθησις εἶδος αἰσθητῶν (*De Anima* 432a1-3).

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